1(Messing E-5 (1953-1954) 1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

137 centers of old world agriculture in which the Neolithic
241 economy originated, possibly contributing to the initial development of ancient Egyptian civilization. Like the highlands of Yemen, the highlands of Ethiopia seem to represent ancient centers of TERRACED AGRICULTURE. It was in the Kaffa province of Ethiopia that coffee originated. It was carried to Yemen, planted there, and exported from coastal harbors (like the town of Mocha) through the Red
439 Sea into the Mediterranean. Coffee is still Ethiopia's most important export. Other major exports include sundried hides, sheep and goat skins, cereals, edible oils, and gold.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that major imports consist primarily of items not of major importance in subsistence, but which reflect secondary needs: cotton sheeting (abujedid), cotton yarn, cotton piece goods, raw cotton, naphtha. The major exception is salt, still a major import.[6]

137 Many varieties of wild fruit and vegetables are eaten
262 only in small quantities, especially by the Amhara, partly because of the abundance of cereal crops and legumes, partly because of a cultural attitude that despises "wild food" fit for use only in case of crop failure, famine due to warfare, and for outcasts.

Another group of highly useful plants which grow wild in Ethiopia are the oilseeds. A number of these are planted and used in the diet.

137
241 In the lower regions of the plateau, mainly south of
248 the Amhara area, a "false banana" fiber crop called muz or

6. US Dept. of Commerce: "Ethiopia", OIT Vol.2, No12, May 1947, 4pp.

285 Other fiberwork and basketry include: a large bas-
415 ket of withes, "qerchat", used to measure 25 kilos of pin-head-grained tyeff; a table made of split bamboo ("qerqa-ha"), or of a variety of reeds ("sabaz", "geramta", "akar-ma"); baskets to carry dry food)"akofada") made by shep-herding boys and girls; baskets to carry soggy stew, covered by morocco-type tanned leather by the faqi specialists, with straps holding the lid tight ("agalgel"); little grain baskets ("qulbit"); and the even smaller dowry basket ("mu-day") in which the bride carries her personal spinning equipment and little materials for adornment and ornament, often itself ornamented with dyed reeds; plaited straw baskets, very tightly woved and used as milking pots("qwacha")

285 There is also a purely ornamental fiber plate, en-
[531] tirely flat, with interwoven ornamentally dyed reeds, most-ly in ring patterns and star designs. These are hung on the inner wall of the tuqul, probably in imitation of the interior decoration of the feudal "great man" 's house.

285 Young boys learn to make a slingshot ("wanchar")
411 of a strong fiber ("nacha"). When completed, it has a
857 loop on one end to hook over a finger. A pebble is pla-ced in the protruding and flat center; then the slingshot is swung several times around the head and the loose end
[244] released at just the right speed and direction. It can stun a baboon and thus chase the band threatening the crops, or frighten off birds.

● 439 Some imported tools and utensils, have reached the
412 Amhara, but remained trade good. One was the straight ra-zor, "arab melach", bought from Arabs as the name indicated,

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

perhaps replacing obsidian blades. They are now in turn being replaced by European safety razor blades even on remote rural big markets. These are called "lesa melaq" although very commonly still sold by an Arab trader. The small glass drinking bottle called "berelle", used in place of a cup for mead, has been brought by caravans from the Middle East since the Ottoman Turkish period. The European drinking glass, "berčheqo" is still rare in rural areas.

F. Clothing

There is a substratum of wearing skins in all of Ethiopia, sheepskin particularly and even leopard skin. Among the Amhara this appears among poor wandering church students, and in the fact that certain textile articles, notably the "lämd", symbolize the leopard skin of the warrior which he still wore at the time of the accession of the present emperor. This type of clothing is in the African tradition.

But the clothing of the Amhara today is largely of cotton, plus a wool cape for the feudal "great men" or landowning farmer. Both have come to Abyssinia from the Middle East areas: the long shirt, "qämis" probably came during the 19th century, together with the white Indian jodphurs (that some trace as late as Lord Napier's campaign); the wool burnus is believed to have entered as long ago as the 5th century A.D., together with Coptic Christianity.[66]

66. Rohrer, E.F.: Beiträge zur Kenntnis der materiellen Kultur der Amhara. Bern, 1932, p. 19.

291 [439] Raw cotton and cotton sheeting have long been imported, and still are, but the toga (shamma), probably the oldest of the Abyssinian cotton garments, is made domestically, from cotton spun by the housewife and woven on the handloom of the weaver.

The cotton clothing now considered "traditional" is [765] always white. The explanation given by the pious is that white is the expression of mourning, because of the passing from the earth of Jesus Christ.

[294] Tailoring is done by poor semi-specialized Amhara men at "big markets". Garments are made with great care, to follow the traditional style and also fit well. There are no new fashions in these costumes, for the prevalent pattern is conservative: to be properly dressed for the occasion, in the style of one's forebears. Variety exists in trousers: the jodphurs which reach to the bare feet, as former clothing of feudal lords, are more prestigeful than the wide peasant trousers that narrow to the leg just below the knee. The shirt, worn kneelength above the trousers, similarly narrows on the forearm, and is therefore called "ej tebab" (lit. narrow-sleeve) in the vernacular, instead of "qamis", the proper name (possibly from French chemise, though no Amhara would admit this foreign name for his "traditional" shirt). The only untailored garment is the toga, but this is used for expression of moods and situational conditions (see "language of the shamma").

296 Laundering is done in or near riverbeds, or brooks, by women, housewives or female ex-slaves, using the dried

291 and women, as protection from rain and cold in the rainy season. Finely embroidered, it was also a garment of high prestige, since the king himself presented it to his liege lords from his own royal workshop, frequently made by imported artisans from the Middle East and their Abyssinian [439] apprentices, often slaves. It is still worn by feudal lords in remote rural areas, but has to be bought from caravan traders who import it, though there are rumors that they were until recently still produced in the district of Bäjä-da in remote, mountainous Semyen sub-province.

292 The old prestige of the "burnos" lives on in the "käbä", the royal (hoodless) cape or mantle, of dark wool with embroidered stiff collar and borders, draped over the shoulders, and reaching to the ankles. This garment is still the prerogative of royalty, of nobility on festive occasions, and of priests. It was the garment seen in western newsreels at the time Emperor Haile Selassie wore it in Geneva and London, even with his European suit.

286 During the time of the roving Amhara feudal chiefs, even in Menelik's time, when capitals were no more than tent cities, carpet making was extensive. Some were used as tapestry, by the nobility. The best were imported, but there was considerable domestic production. A type called "kqzē" was woven, surviving for a while in remote areas such as the aforementioned "Bäjäda" district in Semyen, but not of any economic significance. It died out as an art, with the death of the old craftsmen, increase in imports, and the end of the tent cities. Cheap rugs have replaced the carpets, just as imported black chintz has replaced

286 An experienced weaver can throw the shuttle as quickly as every 1/2 second, which would mean 120 picks a minute. It is a one-man operation, and the junior helper is employed primarily to carry the portable comb hand bobbins and make fastenings as indicated. An average, simple shamma takes about two days of work, but cases have been known when an experienced weaver in the prime of life, working uninterruptedly for 12 hours from sunrise to sunset, without rest and withour mishap, did it in one day, because of the pressure of an approaching marriage. The marriage months following the harvest are the busy season, ending at the approach of the light rains. Often a weaver takes 3 days for an average shamma, with long rests during the work day; a "kutta" toga may well take a week.

Weavers usually work by special order only and do not store any products for more advantageous sale, for the "season". They are craftsmen, not traders, particularly the Falashas, and they employ no middleman. Thus the transaction is on the interpersonal level. This is even true in the provincial towns. Only in Addis Ababa can a market section be found where traders store and sell readymade shammas, but nearly always they are of the muslin, cheesecloth-type variety, with a selection of colorfully embroidered, narrow borders.

286 386 439 Traditional dying is rarely of the cloth, but mostly of threads which are then used in embroidery. In the past many of these red and blue dyes were imported from the coast, from India, or colored threads

286 pulled from imported cloth. Now most of these dyes are
386 imported from Europe, and many are colorfast only in
439 cold water (which causes little difficulty as most washing is in cold water). Such embroidery must be paid for extra, but the simple, narrow, single-colored border of the shamma, of the rural type, is included in the price.

286 For such a peasant shamma, the weaver receives
434 from Eth$5 to 8.- depending on whether or not the customer supplied all the prepared cotton. An average, experienced weaver can usually get enough orders to earn about Eth$200.- per year, in the rural area. If he does no farming other than gardening, his food cost may be Eth$140.- per annum. The average weaver is left with more cash than the farmer, who rarely has more than Eth$30.- left in cash at the end of the year. More often the weaver also farms, since his "season" does not conflict with the major active farming season. A hard-working weaver of solid reputation has the opportunity to accumulate comparative wealth, at least theoretically, but since most rural ethnic specialists, including the Falashas, are not much concerned with commercial profit, few do. It occurs more often among Muslim town weavers.

286 The social position of the weaver, apart from his
554 ethno-religious affiliation, gives him a high place among working specialists, almost equal to that of the musician (if it were not for the fact that the weaver is usually non-Coptic). He is above the status of a smith, and there is no suspicion of black magic attached to the

443 or green ones for "alecha" meat sauce; tyeff grain; imported and native spices; linseed and nug oil seeds; firewood; chickens; donkeys and sheep and goats, but no more expensive livestock. Approaching feasts, fasts and rainy season change the emphasis and variety of products and activities.

438 The big Saturday market emphasizes items of long-distance trade such as salt, from the lowland plain of Areho, in Danakil, bordering on French Somaliland. Bricks of this coarse-grained salt "Amolye" were formerly used as money, their value increasing with the distance from the place of origin. This has been gradually discontinued during the reign of the present Emperor, and salt is now also imported in crushed pebbles from the Sudan, called "Senar" after the area of origin. The big bar has become rare, is called "lemadäw", and costs from Eth$4.- for a big one to Eth$ 50¢ for a little one.

438 439 Coffee comes from Jimma. Raw cotton is sold by weight, from the Matamma border of the Sudan, brought on camel back. Spices (e.g. abusda) and incense come from as far as Yemen. Razor blades come from England. Imports from the Sudan include much cotton cloth: "abujedid" for shirt-making, more expensive cotton "stock" material, and now also khaki cloth for shorts and modern bush jackets.

439 [65] Import duty is high, as much as Eth$9.- per "taqa", about 45 meters. Some raw cotton is domestic, from the Setit market of the Wolkait jungle border. "Taqa"

439 bales of finished material include white khaki, "mä-
bruq"; a thinner and cheaper quality, "mahmädi"; and
colorful prints, sometimes of rayon and even silk, "ba-
la mänäter", used by the Coptic clergy to wrap the ta-
bot in, or to make colorful umbrellas for processions.

In the past, most imports were for the top feu-
dal chiefs and the clergy (e.g. chintz for the mantle
439 replacing some uses of the older burnos). Now every
291 Amhara, even if poor, wants to own a pair of white Jod-
phurs, for going to town, to church and to special feasts.
In the cities, the semi-educated now also sport a long-
sleeve, khaki bush jacket, the "duba", worn usually un-
der a light shamma instead of a peasant one, and only
fully educated top officials have gone over to full
439 European dress. This has steadily increased imports of
cotton cloth, ever since Menelik's victories made even
[293] the poorer Amhara feel "noble". The sun-umbrella once
reserved for the king, "jan tela" became the ambition
of every peasant housewife. Little porcelain cups,
"fenjal", are often the only item of foreign origin,
besides cotton cloth, found even in remote hamlets, for
the use of honored guests.

The drawing power of the big markets was increased
still more when the Italians built roads to some of them
during 1936-1940. Their heavy trente-quatro trucks
bring imported items mostly from Asmara and the Red Sea
coast: blankets, wood or glass beads for necklaces,
sandals, Egyptian rubber sneakers, Yemen incense and

439 some spices, English razorblades, sewing needles, safety pins, Lux soap in hotelroom size, laundry soap cake, kerosene, etc. The wholesalers, usually Arabs, buy these and sell them to Muslim Ethiopian retailers. Sometimes, in bigger towns, Arabs open regular stalls and even stores to sell these items daily, as well as special luxuries such as chocolate, hard candy, and products of the central Ethiopian government such as matches (a government monopoly), cigarettes for Muslims (also a government monopoly), school notebooks with the picture of the Emperor on the title page, pencils, imported readymade eyeglasses, etc. On their return trips the trente-quatro trucks are heavily laden with produce such as tyeff, nug, linseed, peas, beans, honey, sheepskins, cowhides, and in some areas musk from the civet cat, and coffee.

438 The purchases of the farmer consist in greater part of items from other areas of Ethiopia, notably, salt, coffee, spices, some of the raw cotton and matches. Much of this is still carried by traditional caravan, where no roads exist or where they have been washed out. Caravans form after the middle of the dry season, and return just before the rainy season, so that the farmer can stock up on staples.

435 To pay for these purchases and for some of the imported items such as razor blades, the farmer brings his produce, but prices fluctuate between seasons, with every arrival or departure of caravans (or trucks), and with distance. For example, 1 quintal (100 kilos) of

651 dition; with fertility of soil, size of plot, size of harvest in a given year, constituting merely secondary considerations. For the tribute is regarded as payment
651 427 also for the right to squat on the land, to gather dead-wood and cowdung for fuel, wood and nature-grown fibers for utensils, pasture cattle and donkeys, build a hut, use the water in the brook. Consequently, a greedy landlord parcels out his land in smallest possible plots, to receive as much profit as possible, and he is aided and abetted in this by the poor tenants who are so jealous of each other that they complain if their neighboring tenant has been granted more land than he can farm without servants. The tribute for such a minimum plot to the landlord thus takes the form of a "quitrent" (now that the statute-labor has been abrogated officially, though not always actually):

1 madiga of grain (usually tyeff), referred to as "amsho"

plus 1/2 madiga of "qolo" (usually barley, for roasted condiments or beer-making).

651 439 Only in export duties and import tariffs does the central government have full control. Export taxes, ranging usually from 28 - 50% on coffee, the major valuable export, are levied and collected by the Ministry of Finance. This product comes from the southwest, Jimma sub-province, or Harar, in the southeast, both areas conquered by Menelik II from the Galla, and therefore under more unchallenged central administration.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

651 Import duties are collected on the relatively limited
439 routes of access to the country, e.g. on cotton sheeting, and on modern "luxury" items imported for Europeans in Addis Ababa.

202 Communications were recognized by both Emperor Menelik II and Haile Selassie I as one of the foremost bottlenecks. At the turn of the present century and in some areas even later, messages and orders from and to provincial administrators were still carried by the traditional runner on horseback, carrying the message wedged in the top of a cleft stick, which assured safe conduct even through valleys dominated by bandits. Menelik
206 II introduced telegraph and telephone service at least to the major provincial capitals, and this has been improved since, though the rural district headquarters often still are without either form of modern communication, not to speak of the rural hinterland.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

643 he had, since he was Arraz of the Chaufas, that is, head or
701 captain of the men at arms, was to go about like a man at
631 arms. In the fashion that he went, there followed behind him twenty or thirty men with spears and bucklers, so that he goes about the court like a provost with his men. I knew another Arraz Tagale, and Arraz Jacob, lords of large lands, and many other Xuums, lords of lands, but without titles. Thus the Barnagais is the lord of many
643 lords, and of many lands and people, and so he and all
631 these lords that have been mentioned are subject to the
65 Prester John, and he removes and appoints them as he
439 pleases: so they pay to him large dues. As all these lords and their lordships are on the side of Egypt and Arabia, from whence come the good horses, and the brocades and the silks, they pay in these same goods: that is to say, horses, brocades, and other silks. They come to the Barnagais with all these dues, and the Barnagais to Prester John, and pays for himself and for the others, in each year, a hundred and fifty horses; as to the brocades and silks, it cannot be known how much they amount to, only I heard say that they were many; I also heard that they pay a large sum of cotton cloths from India for the customs which they levy in the port of Arquiquo.

CAP. XXV.—*Of their method of guarding their herds from wild beasts, and how there are two winters in this country: and of two churches that are in the town of Barua.*

[621] The settlement of this town of Barua and of those
231 adjoining it, is this. There are ten, twelve, or fifteen houses, and one walled and closed yard, served by a gate: in this yard they shut up their domestic cows which they use for their milk and butter, and also small flocks, and mules and asses. They keep the gate well fastened, and a great fire,

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5 • Ethiopia MP1

3

The World of the Amhara Peasant

The life of the peasantry has been a constant setting for the Amhara drama. It is the faithful pedal point against which the ups and downs of Ethiopian history have been played. We cannot savor that history fully without becoming closely acquainted with the peasant himself.

If understanding the peasantry is important for a truer picture of the Abyssinian past, it is indispensable for a sensible approach to Ethiopia's future. Ethiopia is and will remain for a long time a predominantly agricultural nation, one whose exports—chiefly coffee, skins, and oilseeds—depend almost exclusively on rural output. The one economist to have discussed the problem at any length in print maintains that agriculture is the one area in which Ethiopia can reasonably expect significant economic development in the foreseeable future.[1] Conscious efforts to stimulate peasant productivity, however, may issue in stagnation or even setbacks if they are not based on a realistic understanding of the peasants' own attitudes and conditions of life.

Ethiopians who are striving to modernize their country have for the most part lost touch with the peasantry. If they were born and raised in one of the cities, they may have had no direct contact with the peasantry at all. If their origins are rural, they have been oriented all their school days toward gaining a modern education and tend, wittingly or not, to ignore what they can of their past. Nor are they helped much in this regard by foreign technical experts, who tend to have a modernist bias and typically know still less about the indigenous peasantry. Understanding of the peasantry by scholars, on the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

phenomenon, however, the intellectuals are already unmistakably in evidence, and if one contrasts them as a social stratum with the new nobility their outlines become readily visible.

The new nobility came into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of political *centralization*. The status of its members rests on their possession of political influence, measured partly by the strength of their personal followings but primarily by how close they are to the Emperor, and on the Westernized style of life made possible by wealth acquired through political office, rents, and commerce. Its ascendance as a status group may be located approximately in the decade after 1945, the year in which failure of a revolt in Tigre Province marked the end of attempts to assert provincial claims inspired by allegiance to members of the old nobility. The decade was marked by rapid growth of the factors supportive of centralized government and the new nobility: expansion of the bureaucracy, strengthening of the national military force, and economic advance.*

The intelligentsia, by contrast, has come into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of technical *modernization*. The status of its members rests on their possession of secular Western education, status differences within the group depending on the academic degree attained and the prestige of the school attended. The development of the intelligentsia as a counter-elite has its beginnings in the present decade, beginning around 1955, the year of the jubilee celebration of the twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. This was a lavishly contrived affair which, occurring at about the time that the first sizable group of postwar college students had returned from abroad, accentuated in their minds a sense of alienation from the *ancien régime*. The present decade is marked by dramatic increase in the number of Ethiopians with college degrees and secondary school certificates, and in the general prestige of education as such in the country. For, it will be remembered, in the late forties the government found it necessary to pay families to get them to send their children to school; whereas by the late fifties, there were far too many applicants for the available places.

The pattern of recruitment of members of the new nobility has been continuous with important elements of the traditional social system. It rests on the belief in the sanctity of the emperor and the legitimacy of his unlimited political authority, and the practice of emperors sometimes to raise to high position men of low background who were *ipso facto* more trustworthy. The personnel of the new nobility, moreover, have in a number of cases been drawn from members of old noble families.

By contrast, the formation of the intelligentsia represents a break with the

* Due largely to trade in coffee, whose export value climbed more or less steadily from Eth$17 million in 1947 to Eth$123 million in 1957.